

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1118

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINS, SOPN, SHUM

SUBJECT: PINOCHET'S VIEWS ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. SUMMARY: PINOCHET CLAIMS THAT COMPLETE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION EXISTS IN CHILE, BUT WITH STRINGS ATTACHED, AND THAT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IS OBVIOUSLY MUCH BETTER THAN WORLD OPINION BELIEVES. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT PINOCHET IN SPEECH TO CHILEAN NATIONAL PRESS ASSOC. FEB. 17 SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WERE RESTRICTIONS ON PRESS DURING THE FIRST MONTHS OF JUNTA RULE, "WE CAN TODAY INDICATE THAT THERE EXISTS COMPLETE LIBERTY OF EXPRESSION, WITHOUT LIMITATION OTHER THAN THAT OF ETHICS AND COMMON SENSE, THEREBY AVOIDING A FALL INTO LICENSE OR OTHER VICES."

3. HE WENT ON TO REMIND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO BE OBJECTIVE AND REALISTIC, REFLECTING MORAL AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ABANDONED DURING THE RECENT PAST. HE STATED THERE CANNOT BE A RETURN TO SENSATIONALIST JOURNALISM. IN CLOSING, PINOCHET CALLED UPON CHILEAN PRESS TO EXPLAIN "THE TRUTH" CONCERNING CHILE AGAINST THE DAILY LIES AND SLANDERS OF ITS ENEMIES. "TRUTH IS ON OUR SIDE", HE DECLARED.

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4. SPEAKING WITH PRESS FEB. 18, PINOCHET EXPRESSED HIS

SATISFACTION IN NEWS, NOT CONFIRMED, THAT MEXICO WOULD ACCEPT 151 DETAINEES, BUT SAID HE HAS NO ILLUSIONS THAT THE "HUMANITARIAN ACTS" OF GOC WOULD BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE MARXISTS AND PRO-MARXISTS.

5. HE SAID THE FOREIGN PRESS IGNORES MEASURES ADOPTED BY GOC IN FAVOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS, CITING THE LIFTING OF STATE OF INTERNAL WAR, THE GRANTING OF SAFE CONDUCT PASSES, THE CONTINUING RELEASE OF DETAINEES HELD UNDER STATE OF SIEGE, AND THE DROPPING OF CHARGES IN SOME CASES, ALLOWING THOSE PERSONS TO PEAVE CHILE.

6. REFERRING TO "FALSE STORIES OF TERROR", PINOCHET SAID HE PERSONALLY HAD ORDERED THE CREATION OF MEDICAL TEAMS TO MONITOR THE HEALTH OF DETAINEES, AND HAD PUNISHED TO THE MAXIMUM DEGREE THOSE OFFICIALS WHO HAD "OVERSTEPPED" THEIR AUTHORITY, SEPARATING THEM FROM THE SERVICE IN SOME CASES AND APPLYING LEGAL PENALTIES.

7. COMMENT: IN TAKING TACK THAT PRESS SITUATION IN CHILE IS OBVIOUSLY GOOD AND THAT ISSUES CONTINUALLY RAISED BY CRITICS ARE OVERSTATED OR INEXISTENT, PINOCHET IS RISKING IMPAIRMENT OF HIS CREDIBILITY. ALTHOUGH FEW IF ANY PUBLICATIONS SUFFER PRIOR CENSORSHIP, THERE REMAINS SELF-CENSORSHIP, WHICH IS IN MANY WAYS MORE CONFINING.

8. IN AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WE AGREE PROGRESS IS BEING MADE ON RELEASE OF DETAINEES, BUT UNTIL THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT ON OTHER FRONTS (DUE PROCESS, MODIFYING STATE OF SIEGE), CHILE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE BOTH A PROBLEM AND A POOR WORLD IMAGE.
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